"TAKE HEED TO THYSELF AND TO THY TEACHING, BE EARNEST IN THEM. FOR IN SO DOING THOU WILT SAVE BOTH THYSELF AND THOSE WHO HEAR THEE."

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The Church in the Northern Countries

A Study of the Church's Apostolate in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Faroe Islands

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The Church in the Northern Countries

A Study of the Church's Apostolate in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Faroe Islands

By

HANS BANG

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1.

Historical Background

1. By "Scandinavia", is meant, first of all, the three countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, which, in every way, are closely related to one another, even linguistically. Up to 1918, Iceland was a part of Denmark and hence has developed much along the same lines. Ethnologically and linguistically its population is purely Nordic also. Icelandic, however, can only be understood by those Scandinavians who have a knowledge of the older forms of the Nordic languages.

2. Finland must also be numbered among the Scandinavian countries, although the majority of the population speak a non-Nordic, non-Aryan language. Ethnologically, however, the Finnish people are largely of Germanic origin. Situated between the borders of Sweden and Russia, Finland, politically united to Sweden until 1809, has received much of her cultural and part of her Christian ideas from Sweden.

3. Of the Scandinavian countries, Denmark was the first to accept Christianity. St. Ansgar (801-65), often called "the Apostle of the North," came to Denmark in the 820's. His successors to the See of Bremen continued working for the expansion and consolidation of the new belief. A tremendous difficulty for the natives was the acceptance of Christian ethics forbidding family feuds, homicide, human sacrificing and the custom of abandoning unwanted children to death in the forests. It is a generally accepted fact today that the majority of the Danish people received baptism about the year 960. Yet Christianity had no great influence on the Danish way of life before Canute the Great (1018-35) summoned English bishops and priests to his realm. During

the reign of King Svend Estridsen (1047-74), the organization of the Danish Church was expanded, and Denmark became closely knit to Rome. In 1105, Lund, at that time a Danish but now a Swedish town, became an archbishopric.

4. Christianity came to Norway when one of her kings, Olaf Trygvesen, Christianized his countrymen, sometimes by means of force, and again by clever persuasion. On account of his aggressive methods, Olaf Trygvesen was killed by Norwegian rebels acting with Swedes and Danes. Yet this great Norwegian, even today, is claimed by the State Church of Norway as "Holy Olaf, Patron of Norway." Christianity influenced Norwegian life slower still than in Denmark. Iceland received the Gospel before Norway, when it was accepted voluntarily by a number of the great men of the country, among whom was the wise and highly respected Njal. As early as the year 1100, Christianity was peaceably acknowledged as the state religion of the island.

5. In Sweden, Christianity was established about 1100 by missionaries from Denmark and Norway often at the price of their lives. Finland differs from the other Scandinavian countries by the fact that Christianity came to the country chiefly along the great commercial roads, both from the East and the West. Of decisive importance, however, were two later Swedish crusades, one of which was led by the bishop of Upsala, Henry (English by birth), about the year 1150. Bishop Henry worked for a little while with great success in the western parts of the country. He died a martyr. First bishop of a Finnish See was Thomas (about 1220-45) also an Englishman. The Russian Orthodox Church tried to bring the teachings of Christ to Finland from the rather far-away town of Novgorod. It is worth noting that the oldest Christian relics to be found in Finland are from the Orthodox Church, which Christianized Eastern Finland long before the western part of the country. Already in the early Middle Ages the Christian East and West were struggling for supremacy in Finland, the fate of which at that time was decided by the victory of the West. Two new crusades from the West assured the authority of

the Latin Church in Finland, with the exception of the easternmost parts.

6. In the centuries up to the Reformation, the Scandinavian countries formed an organic part of Christian Europe, taking a passive as well as an active part in European science and culture. For three centuries the Catholic Church in the Scandinavian countries continued an uninterrupted growth, chiefly because the discord so widespread within the Church in Central Europe had not spread to the Northern Countries. In Sweden and Finland the priesthood was on a high level just prior to the Reformation. St. Brigitta of Sweden was a living example of all that the Church taught, and her example was of prime importance to the furtherance of piety among the people. In all the Scandinavian countries numerous Religious congregations were engaged in works of charity and teaching.

7. Evidence of the connection between the Northern and Latin worlds may be had from the number of students who throughout all the Middle Ages went to make their university studies in Paris, Bologna, and elsewhere in Europe. The first Danish student at the Sorbonne is supposed to have been Bishop Absalon (the founder of the Danish capital), who died in 1201. Several sources show that some seventy-five Danes in the 13th century acquired a Master's Degree in Paris. In 1275, a special *Collegium Danicum,* maintained by Danes, was established at the Sorbonne. At different times, Scandinavians became Rectors of the Paris University. Scandinavian scholars wrote numerous scientific works, the Danes excelling in linguistics.

8. In Denmark, the Catholic medieval age coincides with the great political age of the country. Then Norway depended upon Denmark. Finland was still too far away and, moreover, was politically unimportant. The great political age of Sweden comes only after the Reformation. It is significant that the greatest political genius Denmark has ever had was Bishop Absalon, who, at one and the same time, was a bishop, a scientist, a statesman and a warrior. His statue, occupying a central location, is a main feature on the

outside of the beautiful City Hall of Copenhagen. The great political age of Sweden dates from the time of King Gustav Adolf (1611-32) who during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) fought on the side of German Protestants.

9. Under King Frederick, the teachings of Luther had already struck root in Denmark, but they did not entirely prevail either there or in Norway until the reign of his son, King Christian III who, after a successful struggle against the power of the nobles of the land, made Lutheranism the State religion. In the course of a few years, all the bishops were imprisoned and all Church property was confiscated and added to the royal treasury. Denmark's more than 700-year-old connection with the Mother Church of Rome was completely broken.

10. The introduction of Lutheranism into Denmark, even more so than in other countries, was motivated by economics and politics. This ecclesiastical rebellion excluded for a long time the Danish people from any spiritual bond with the Catholic parts of Europe, and for nearly three centuries Scandinavia came under the influence of German culture. Scandinavian university students, who once had the Sorbonne of Paris and Bologna for their goal, now went to Wittenberg and other Protestant universities. Danish and Norwegian spiritual life faithfully followed the German pattern—as it expressed itself in Orthodoxy, Pietism, Rationalism and Romanticism up to the latter part of the 19th century. From the beginning, Scandinavia was excluded from the strong spiritual and cultural influence of the Counter-reformation. The rupture with the Catholic Middle Ages was most marked in Denmark, where, from the year 1560, Catholic re-immigration was prohibited by severe laws, which were later put into force in Norway and Iceland, and introduced into Sweden and Finland in 1604.

11. Because Norway, in the 1530's, was at the lowest point in her political history—a mere province of Denmark—it was not too difficult for King Christian III of Denmark to impose Lutheranism on the people (1537). This he did by means of great violence and cruelty. The new teachings,

however, met resistance, and more than one Danish Lutheran preacher sent to Norway was killed. To the Norwegian people, even more so than to the Danes, Lutheranism seemed an unpatriotic movement forced upon them. Consequently, the new doctrine deforming the true religion of Christ was slow to take root. King Christian then confiscated all the property of the Church for the benefit of the State and deprived it of all its authority.

12. Thus in Norway the Church's autonomy was lost and with it was lost also all her prestige and influence over the people. At the same time, the Norwegian State itself lost its independence through the destruction of the Church, and later, when the foreign Danish occupational government sought to preserve "the church" it was in order to put the authority of the Church at the political service of the State.

13. In Iceland, which like Norway became subject to Denmark, the introduction of Lutheranism was still more difficult. Bishop Jón Arason proved to be a far more valiant and a more constant champion of the old Church than any other prelate in the Danish-Norwegian kingdom, where, as a rule, the laymen had clung tenaciously to their Catholic faith. When Christian II, in the year 1539, made an Icelander a Lutheran Superintendent (the original Protestant term for the successors of the bishops), the Icelanders, led by Bishop Jón, declared that they would not accept the Superintendent because he had not been sent by the Roman Church. Bishop Arason, who received encouragement from the Pope, succeeded in his resistance until 1550, when he was taken prisoner and executed by the troops of Christian III. From then on the Reformation slowly triumphed in Iceland.

14. Sweden was first of the Northern countries to be Lutheranized. Her liberator from Danish tyranny, Gustaf Vasa, (1523-60) forced acceptance of the new doctrine at the historic Parliamentary Meeting at Vasteraas (1527). He did not find it necessary to use the violent means employed by the Danish king.

15. The greater part of the bishops relinquished resist-

ance, save for some notable exceptions. In much a similar way, as in the time of Elizabeth England accepted Protestantism, so did Sweden accept Lutheranism. "Bishops" were "consecrated" to their offices by the bishop of Vasteraas. A majority of Swedish Lutheran theologians of today attach considerable importance to the theory that the Swedish church, as distinct from the other Scandinavian churches, has preserved "the Apostolic succession." For this reason many Swedish Church people feel themselves on a par with the Church of England, which on different occasions has made approaches to the Swedish Church.

16. The Church in Finland, on the eve of the Reformation, was not in decay. This may be proved from the fact that there were in the country some one hundred and twenty churches for a Catholic population of about 300,000. On account of its political connections with Sweden, Finland fell a victim to the revolutionary Reformers of Sweden. After the resignation of Ericus Svenoni (1523), the last Bishop of Finland, whose election had not been confirmed by the Holy See, King Gustav Vasa appointed his personal friend, Martin Skytte, an apostate Dominican friar, as Bishop of all Finland. This "bishop" proceeded to break all relations with the Catholic Church and exerted his power to impose Lutheranism on the Finnish people. Because the Faith was strong among the people, the strategem used was deceit rather than direct violence. In this, Skytte was aided greatly by the Finnish Lutheran, Michael Agricola, who preserved much of the ritual of the Mass as well as Confession, but abolished the doctrine of Purgatory and prayers for the dead. True, this was oppression and spoliation of the Church, but the Reformation was accomplished without the violence characteristic of it in other countries.

17. Up to our days, the Protestant religious service in Finland has preserved more traces of its Catholic origins than in other Scandinavian countries. Over 100 years were to elapse before all traces of the true Faith were obliterated in Finland.

2.
Ecclesiastical Tendencies

18. There is no need to discuss different sects established in countries outside the Scandinavian lands such as Baptists, Methodists, The Latter Day Saints, or the Salvation Army. In one or more points of doctrine, these sects differ so essentially from Lutheranism that they have no place within the framework of the Scandinavian State Churches. There is, however, a possibility of their recognition as independent confessional bodies, which would mean that ecclesiastical acts, such as baptism and marriage, performed by their clergy may be considered by the State just as valid as if performed by the clergy of the State Church. Within the State Churches themselves, however, certain religious observances of Northern origin are to be found. To a Protestant mind these observances do not seem sectarian. But to a Catholic mind they seem as "a church within the church." These "tendencies" within the Church often differ considerably from the general teaching of the State Church. In four of the Scandinavian countries—Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland —the State Church is liberal and "broadminded." Only in Sweden does the State Church demand exact accordance from her followers. As a consequence, all dissenting Lutherans are obliged to leave the State Church and form independent confessional bodies. Hence Sweden, more than other Scandinavian countries, has a Lutheran Church dissenter problem, and these groups sometimes are in sharp opposition to the State Church.

19. In the center of the Scandinavian State churches there is a High Church movement clinging to the pure Lutheran confession, resisting tendencies of decay and the right of private judgment. Great importance, for instance, is at-

tached to the Sunday church service, thus aiming at ecclesiastical conservation. There is strong opposition to the separation of State and Church.

20. On Danish soil, *Grundtvigianism* originated. This movement has a certain importance for Norwegian, Icelandic and Finnish church life, but less so for Sweden. This movement was wholly determined by its founder, the scientist, theologian, and poet N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), a prominent Nordic-Protestant personality, who in his belief that the Nordic people could have a spiritual autarchy suitable to their soul and culture, rejected everything pertaining to Latin civilization. He demanded an independent development of the Danish people founded upon a realization of their mythical and historical traditions. He created the special Danish (Nordic) Peoples' High Schools or "Folk Schools" with studies aiming at the development of the character of the individual and his "popular elements," or national culture. By experiencing the contrast between Life and Death in a Christian sense, man reaches a harmonized Christian philosophy of life, where the human and the Christian elements form a synthesis ("Man first, then the Christian"). The *Grundtvigian* movement has three characteristics:

(1) It acknowledges two Sacraments only, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and recognizes the importance of the Apostles' Creed, which Grundtvig considered as a safer anchor than the Bible, because, as he said, the Apostles' Creed was directly taken from Christ, "words from the mouth of God."

(2) The "popular elements"—namely, myth and history—are necessary to the very life of the people and must be taken as intimately connected with the Christianity of the country, without which the people would perish.

(3) A love of freedom made Grundtvig himself and later on his movement champions of individual, national and ecclesiastical liberty. Hence the Grundtvig movement is intimately connected with democratic and national strivings within the Danish nation.

21. Of Danish origin also is the so-called "Inner Mission" (mission within the nation). From its origin this is a lay movement dating from the year 1853. In contrast to the Christianity of Grundtvig which calls itself "joyous Christianity," the Inner Mission stresses the zealousness of Christianity. It is typically "evangelistic" or "revivalist," appealing for conversion from the sinful existence of the average human being. It attaches great importance to the abyss between believers and non-believers. In the traditional sense of the word, the movement often is very pious. Its adherents renounce innocent stimulants and pleasures which they strongly condemn as the works of the devil. Self-education and an active work on the part of the individual for the salvation of his soul are strongly stressed. A conversion is even fixed for a certain hour. This strongly personal Christian life often acquires self-complacent and individualistic-subjective overtones. In its most fanatical form, the "Inner Mission" is anti-cultural and tainted with phariseeism. On its credit side may be mentioned the religious sincerity of its adherents and their high appreciation of the layman's apostolate.

22. An important Swedish movement, which also is outside of the Swedish State Church, is called "Svenska Missions Forbundet."

23. Characteristic of this movement is its conception of "congregation." According to this conception, only such unions of Christians as are open to all Christians, regardless of creed, may be regarded as a congregation in the sense of the New Testament. With its 105,671 members, it presents a not unimportant competition to the stricter State Church.

24. Corresponding more to the Danish "Inner Mission" is the *"Halgelsefarbundet"* which in its regulations declares that it is not an ecclesiastical hierarchical community, but a non-sectarian mission community, aiming at carrying on self-conversion and revivalism. To obtain membership "a child-like relationship to God and holy conduct" is demanded.

25. Another lay movement is the Norwegian *"Haugian-*

ism". This movement is named after the Norwegian farmer H. N. Hauge (1771-1824). In 1796, he came forward as a preacher of penance, who, according to his own writings, was a man driven by the Spirit to preach the word of God. Hauge wandered around most parts of Norway arranging revival meetings in almost every corner of the country. He also appeared in Denmark. For some years he suffered imprisonment for his independent preaching. Like Grundtvig, he was especially opposed to the dominating rationalism of the times. Against rationalism, he stressed the belief in the grace of God through Christ and the renewal of the inner man by belief. Like many before and since, he referred to the end of the world as near at hand. He considered the clergy unnecessary and claimed for all his adherents when prompted by the spirit of God, the right to perform clerical functions. His adherents, however, have always considered themselves members of the State Church. Originally a lay movement, it has in our days been organized into a number of large and small associations. The former itinerant preachers have become a large staff of Association secretaries and traveling clergymen. A circle of Christians, with common interest in missionary work, come together, elect a board of directors and meet regularly, often in a building they themselves have built. These circles form a countrywide association with general assemblies and a great administration machine. It cannot be denied that among these Christians, genuine personal piety and religious earnestness are frequently found, in spite of their doctrinal delusions. Experience has shown that converts from these circles of Christians often turn into eager apostolic-minded Catholics, especially fitted for work in Catholic Action.

26. The Finnish Pietism, corresponding to the revivalist movements just mentioned, has features differing widely from the lay movements of other Scandinavian countries. To understand Finnish religious feeling one must bear in mind that many Finnish Christians up to our own days, on account of the wide areas of this sparsely inhabited country,

live relatively isolated and alone. Up to the 18th century, the Finnish Christian, as a rule, had for his only reading his Bible, his hymnal and maybe some edifying book. He read and meditated. In the loneliness of the wide desolate country his independent spiritual life often tended to mysticism. In such soil, Pietism, originating in Germany, took more lasting root than in the other Scandinavian countries where it is now, almost exclusively, merely an historical phenomenon. In Finland, Pietism also received less impress from popular customs and trivialities than elsewhere, where the greatest importance was attached to the negative sides, namely, outward piety and abstention from worldly, innocent pleasures. In Finnish pietistic circles, tracts of German and English mystical-theosophical literature were read. Towards the end of the 18th century popular movements arose, which centered on ecstatic phenomena, such as talking in tongues and prophecies. Pietism can be traced in Finnish religious life through the 19th and 20th centuries. Seldom, however, has it led to any breach with the State Church. A mystical-sectarian author like John Bunyan (*Pilgrim's Progress*) has in this day many readers among Finnish Christians. Like its allied movements all over the world, Finnish Pietism is introspective in so far that the central point in its interpretation of Christianity is the union of the individual soul and God. Its negative side is an underrating of the Christian community. The movement has created many active Protestant lay apostles. Finnish Pietism has founded several popular high schools, modeled after the Danish Grundtvigian institutions.

27. Besides these great religious popular movements are several minor movements mostly led by Protestant clergymen and theologians. Worth mentioning is, for instance, the Young Ecclesiastical Movement originating in Sweden. A group of young clergymen and theologians, in the 1920's, made it their aim to fight the individualism of the 19th century and promote the Church idea. So-called spiritual exercises or "quiet days" were held in a former Catholic

monastery. An "Oratorium" was founded where theological students supplemented their studies with pious practices and liturgy furthered by Gregorian Chant. This movement is not hostile to the Catholic Church and is suspected by Protestants as crypto-Catholicism.

28. Although it is not our intention to mention movements introduced from abroad, an exception must be made of the Oxford movement, otherwise known as Moral Rearmament, or Buchmanism. This English movement, with its falsely assumed name, swept the Scandinavian countries, Denmark notably, like a storm, in the 1930's. Now it appears to be in decline. It cannot be denied that, at least in the inner circles of the group movement, much good will and a conscious striving for perfection and unselfish sacrifice were manifested. The movement gave the Protestant Church a number of efficient laymen, and contributed to the growth of a religious sense of duty. It tried to make its way into Catholic circles, but the prohibition by the English Episcopate (October, 1946) against belonging to the Oxford Movement, or cooperating with it, has had the effect of a needed instruction.

3.

Protestant Theology in the North

29. Scandinavian Protestantism seems, after the fall of Germany, to have gained a more important place in the Lutheran world. Theological discussions within Protestantism have moved from the centre of Europe, or Germany, to its periphery, Switzerland and Scandinavia. The theologians most discussed in Scandinavian Protestantism are the Swiss, Karl Barth; the Swede, Anders Nygren, and lately the American, Reinhold Niebuhr.

30. Training of Protestant theologians takes place at their respective State Universities (4 Swedish, 2 Danish, 2 Finnish, 1 Norwegian, 1 Icelandic). Most of the Scandinavian theological professores still follow the footsteps of German liberal theology. A new orientation, however, also has its representatives. In this connection, the Danish professor in dogmatism, Dr. Theol. K. E. Skydesgaard deserves special mention. His treatise on *Metaphysics and Belief, A dogmatic study in more recent Thomism* (Copenhagen, 1937) has received full recognition by Catholic theologians as a deep and conscientious research into Thomism concerning our natural comprehension of God. Around Professor Skydesgaard an important circle of Protestant clergymen and lay theologians has been formed. This circle aims at counteracting Protestant modernism as expressed by Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Harnack, by strengthening the Church idea and finally by readopting Catholic thinking and liturgy, as far as this can be done, on the basis of the Augsburg Confession. These theologians see Catholicism as a serious challenge to Protestantism. They stress the irreconciliability of Catholicism

and Protestantism, but strive in an ecumenical spirit for the widest possible understanding of Catholicism. The movement is related to the "Una-Sancta-Movement" in Germany.

31. This circle of theologians, thus orientated, is much influenced by the Protestant thinking expressed by Karl Barth and the Swede, Anders Nygren. The latter, Professor in Dogmatics at the University of Lund, occupies a more and more central position in Scandinavian theological thinking. In his theology, adjustment with Catholicism has an important place. He thinks that Catholicism, by a repeated "Hellenization" of Christianity (the Platonism of the Church Fathers, and the Aristotelicisms of Scholasticism) paved the way for rationalization and, thereby, a falsification of the Gospels. Greek thought, according to him, is the real enemy of Christianity. The basic wrong of Catholicism, according to his opinion, is that it has compromised with Greek thought. To Nygreen, Luther appears as the one who has refound the proper nature of Christianity behind all Hellenizations.

4.
Present Problems Within the Protestant Church

32. The de-Christianization and secularization of public life in all their aspects may be said to form the great actual problems of all Christendom—impossible to be fought against if they are not attacked point by point; morality of marriage, "bourgeois" legislation, social conditions, etc. The great difficulty for the Protestant churches of Scandinavia is that—notwithstanding the efforts of not a few idealistic and unselfish individuals—they have no influence upon public life. Nominally, the majority of Scandinavians belong to the State Churches. But, in reality, their connections with the church, for the greater part, is merely conventional, or none at all. The average adult Protestant generally attends church only on special occasions such as Baptism, Confirmation, marriage, Christmas. But it must be said that the older children of a family, in preparation for Confirmation, undergo a period of intensive and thorough religious training.

33. The greatest defect in religious life in Scandinavia is the absence of ecclesiastical authority. There are Protestant bishops, as a rule, even a Primate, but their authority is equivalent to zero. They are only *primi inter pares,* or else State officials with numerous and trivial official duties. Protestant preachers may, in their services, go far in attacking important parts of Christian beliefs. A practical example of this is the problem of marriage of divorced persons. Although the rituals of the Protestant churches often speak about "faithfulness unto death," not a few clergymen willingly consent to marrying divorced persons. Everything is left to the private decision of the individual.

34. This lack of ecclesiastical authority has become evident in the most recent ecclesiastical tussle in the North concerning female ministers. In Denmark it has now been confirmed by law that women may be ordained ministers and thus have the right to perform divine service and administer the sacraments. Sweden is likely to be the next country to have female ministers. According to Article 3 of the Danish Constitution, "the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the Danish popular church and as such remains supported by the State." Danish, as well as all Scandinavian vicars, are at the same time State functionaries. Parliament (*Rigsdagen*) wanted to have the problem of female ministers solved by law. The Evangelical Lutheran Church, accordingly, had to permit this internal ecclesiastical matter to be discussed before the forum of a purely secular, religiously indifferent institution, elected by a majority vote. Several members of Parliament were personally indifferent. They voted, however, for the ordination of the first female minister out of traditional reluctance against churchmen. Before the ordination (in Denmark 1948), the ordaining bishop received written notice both from the Church of Sweden and from the Church of England not to take this daring step without consulting other Protestant communities. The protest was of no effect.

35. The relation between church and school also is a problem of burning actuality for Scandinavian Protestantism. In Denmark and Finland there has been a bitter exchange of opinions on this matter between Church and State. According to repeated authoritative pronouncements, the Danish popular (public) schools are based on Evangelical Lutheranism. In practice, however, this basis is an object of indifference, and even of attacks. An event in the capital of the country in 1946 made the question one of actual interest. An unmarried female school inspector in Copenhagen, a Communist member of Parliament, declared that she expected a child and did not intend to give up her position, but would fight for the rights of unmarried women to have children as they might wish.

36. The case created a sensation. From ecclesiastical quarters protests were filed against continuing her as an inspector of a Danish popular (public) school and a teacher of religion, when she by her way of life had broken with the concept of marriage taught by the Church. The school board of directors and the Parliament, however, were opposed to the Church. So the woman in question still remains in her office as inspector of the school.

37. In Finland, the struggle between Church and State for control of the school started in the Summer of 1946, when a new school plan was worked out, according to which the number of lessons in religion was reduced from four to two per week. It was feared that this—notwithstanding appreciative talk about the importance of Christianity in education—was a step towards total abolition of religious teaching. The conflict seems to be the beginning of a regular cultural struggle likely to be fought out on several fronts in the Scandinavian countries.

38. Up to a recent date, no Scandinavian country had any Christian political party. The brave resistance of the Norwegian Church during the German occupation, which started in 1942, had prepared the soil for Christians to take an active part in politics. At the last Parliamentary elections in Norway "The Christian Popular Party," which in many ways is related to and inspired by the French "Mouvement Republicain Populaire," gained eight seats in Parliament. This example of the will of the Christians to charge themselves with political responsibility and work is unique in Scandinavia.

5.
The Catholic Church in Scandinavia

39. In all Scandinavian countries Catholicism, from the time of the Reformation till into the 19th century, was totally banished. During all this time it was possible to have chapels built only in the capitals and a few garrison towns for the embassies and hired troops. But these houses of worship were private. The native population were forbidden to visit them and the chapels were not allowed to have towers or church bells. In the past century, during which Catholic missioners again have been permitted to work, remarkable results have been obtained. But obstacles have been and still are strong. The latest available Catholic statistics furnished July, 1948 are given by St. Ansgar's Scandinavian League *(See page 21).*

40. The problem of educating Scandinavian youth so that they might become articulate leaders of Catholic Action is a serious one, chiefly because of the lack of means to maintain schools among so widely separated Catholic groups. Norway and Sweden do not have one Catholic high school. There are slightly more than 33,000 Catholics throughout the 503,775 square miles of territory comprising the Scandinavian countries, with a total population of some 16,-884,000. It should be noted that 20,000 of these Catholics are in Denmark, that is, within an area of 16,575 square miles.

41. Conversions of noted and prominent people do serve to stimulate the Catholics to express themselves, but as the Vicars Apostolic are aware, there is urgent need of a Catholic educational system. Students for the priesthood are obliged

to go to Germany or elsewhere to make their courses. Because of the war-damage to many of these German seminaries, St. Ansgar's Scandinavian Catholic League is making every effort to bring these seminarians to the United States for their clerical preparation. A few Catholic bookstores, remarkably enough, manage to exist in these countries. There are two in Stockholm, Sweden, and one in Oslo, Norway. Denmark has three. There is a Danish weekly, *Katolsk Ugeblad*. First published in October, 1853, it has been issued continuously since that time. Denmark has also a quarterly, which in content and format is similar to the English publication, the *Month*. Norway has a weekly called *St. Olav*.

Statistics of Scandinavia

	Norway	*Sweden*	*Denmark*	*Finland*	*Iceland*
Area in square miles	124,556	173,347	16,575	149,588	39,709
Population	3,123,332	6,000,000	4,000,000	3,633,000	127,770
Catholics	3,200	5,809	20,000	3,500	500
Protestants	2,647,175	5,294,570	3,238,349	3,295,389	125,000
Schismatics			525	68,000	
Jews		6,469	5,947	1,618	
Bishop, Vicar Apost.	1	1	1	1	1
Bishop, Co-Adjutor		1			
Prefects Apostolic	2				
Scandinavian Priests	8	6	27	2	2
Seculars	21	13	33	3	
Religious	13	16	71	9	8
Churches and Chapels	39	34	72	5	4
Sisters	477	137	700	8	29
Number of Congregations	6	9	26	3	3
Native Sisters	30	9	142	2	2
Brothers	1	7	36	2	1
Schools	9	4	30	2	1
Pupils	378	200	1,425	175	20
High Schools			5		
Students			516		
Hospitals—Orphanages	19	10	28	2	1

42. The statistics show a marked difference between Denmark on one side and the remaining Scandinavian countries on the other. To explain the difference we must especially consider conditions in Denmark from a mission point of view, as the same geographical and cultural problems exist

for Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

43. The constitution now valid in Denmark was ratified on June 5, 1849 and granted full religious liberty to every Dane, although, as previously mentioned above, paragraph 3 defined that the State church should be "Evangelical Lutheran." Article 6 says "The King shall belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church." The history of modern Catholicism in Denmark, as in all Scandinavia, dates from that day, June 5, 1849. At that time there were 400 Catholics in the country. Today, nearly one hundred years later. Catholics are from 5 to 7 per 1,000 of the population of the kingdom. They live for the most part in the urban centers of population. In the country districts there are few Catholics except there where Polish families immigrated as workers in the rather important sugar industry. The numbers show that there has been no mass movement into the Church in the century. Although the Church grows steadily and quietly, Catholics still are a small minority. It must not be forgotten, however, that the position of the Church in Denmark is most favorable in comparison to conditions in her three sister countries. Copenhagen has 9 parishes recognized by the State. The provinces have 29 parishes with churches. which are mostly small. In addition, there are some smaller centers, chapels and private houses where Mass is offered.

44. Up to 1892 the Church in Denmark was under the jurisdiction of a Prefect Apostolic. In that year the Danish Mission was erected into a Vicariate under episcopal jurisdiction. Under the early bishops, both of whom were foreigners, (1892-1939) the Church had its greatest expansion. Today is a period of intensification—Churches, schools and hospitals being built, a number of religious Orders called to Denmark, a modest Catholic press and literature, mostly translations, brought into existence. For the first time since the Reformation four centuries ago, a Danish convert, Domi Theodore Suhr, O.S.B., was raised to the Episcopate and made Vicar Apostolic of Denmark with residence in Copenhagen (1939). This fact has been of the greatest psychological importance both to Catholics and non-Catholics.

because it confirmed the Church's national right of existence.

45. For the 20,000 Catholics of Denmark there are 104 priests, of whom about 25 are Danes by birth. The others have come from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Great Britain. Among religious Orders of men, the Jesuits, Redemptorists, Premonstratensians, Dominicans, Franciscans, Fathers of Montfort, Lazarists, Camillians and others are represented. In all branches the priests are assisted in their work by a considerable number of Orders of women, of which the Congregation, St. Joseph Sisters of Chambéry is the largest. The economic situation of the Church has seriously deteriorated since the second World War, because important subsidies from European countries have ceased.

46. In Denmark the steady growth of the Church now, for the greater part, is based on conversions. Around 1920 the number of yearly conversions was about 200. Later it sunk a little and is now between 125 and 150. Converts come from all social groups, women, however, in the majority. In the last decade the number of conversions from intellectual circles has been considerably ahead of conversions from other groups. The last twenty years have brought about an important improvement in the general attitude towards Catholicism, and it is no exaggeration to say that the Church (maybe most so in intellectual university circles) is regarded with respect and esteem. In the public opinion of the country, Danish Catholicism seems to have succeeded in fusing the national culture of old and the Catholic ideal. A notable contributor to this result by his artistic work, thoroughly Catholic in spirit, is Denmark's greatest poet of the day, Johannes Jorgensen, who has but one counterpart in all Scandinavia, the Norwegian historical novelist and convert, Sigrid Undset.

47. This talented lady is a Nobel prize winner, taking the award for her widely acclaimed trilogy *Kristan Lavransdatter,* a novel that deals with early medieval Norway and the building of the Cathedral of Tronjhem. The book

clearly shows how it was the Catholic Church alone which kept the dark ages from becoming the Black ages. King Haakon VII of Norway in 1947 conferred the grand Cross of the Order of St. Olaf on her. It was only the second time in history that this high distinction was given to a woman, and the first time to a woman not of royal blood. The Order, Norway's highest distinction, is conferred upon those who outstandingly serve the country within its borders and bring honor to its name in outside lands.

48. In other Scandinavian countries conditions have been quite different. By way of comparison it may be mentioned that the present Norwegian Constitution, which theoretically grants religious liberty equal to that of Denmark, still preserves an Article forbidding Jesuits to enter the country.

49. Sweden has only 6,000,000 inhabitants, yet it is one of the largest countries of Europe: about 173,347 square miles, or larger than Italy, Prussia or Great Britain and four times as large as Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg and Switzerland put together. In this wide territory there are only 11 parishes with 35 priests, 34 churches and chapels. It will be readily understood how difficult it is for even the Catholic population under such conditions to practise their religion properly. A considerable number of Catholic immigrant families, in the course of time, have abandoned the Church because of their isolation from Catholic surroundings.

50. Another difficulty is that, for four centuries, national tradition has been intimately connected with the Protestant cause. As mentioned before, the great political age of Sweden coincides with the heyday of the Protestant Church. All over Sweden the Catholic Church is considered as a foreign element.

51. The attitude of the State towards Catholicism was anything but friendly. Of the 11 parishes, only 2, located in Stockholm the capital, are recognized by the State. Only in these two parishes is a Catholic priest legally authorized to register births, marriages and deaths. In the other parishes he is deprived of the right. If a Catholic in one of the

other 9 parishes wants to be married, he is obliged to go to the local Protestant clergyman, and the announcement of the marriage must be made in the Protestant parish church. These regulations do not date from the year of the Reformation, but from 1911. State officials still often find that being a Catholic hinders their advancement. A new law, however, is pending, which would abrogate the restriction still in force against Catholics.

52. The poverty of the Swedish Catholic Church is also a serious matter, because the Swedes are a people relatively untouched by two world wars, who enjoy a high degree of culture and attach prime importance to outward appearance. The different Protestant sects have received considerable financial support from America, and have heavily shadowed the Catholic Church in the beauty and extent of churches and their other buildings. Children are lost to the Church because the small Catholic parishes cannot have up-to-date schools in a country where public schools are on a very high level. Despite these difficulties, there is the consolation that post-war times seem to have ushered in a general respect for the Catholic Church in the Scandinavian countries, where so many Protestants, if only vaguely, look to Rome as the safest, and maybe the last bastion of civilization.

53. Actively engaged in helping to restore the Church's ancient glory in these lovely Northern lands is St. Ansgar's Scandinavian League. Founded in 1910, its headquarters are at 40 West 13th Street, New York City. The League has several branches throughout the country. It will send free on request a Bulletin which gives much valuable information about Scandinavia. It provides interesting articles and Catholic news of current interest. The League, besides spreading good literature among Scandinavians of the United States, also promotes prayer for those Northern countries under the patronage of their Saints: Ansgar, Patron of the North; Erik and Birgitta, Patrons of Sweden; Olaf, Patron of Norway; Canute, Patron of Denmark; Henrik, Patron of Finland.

6.
Faroe Islands

54. Half way between Norway and Iceland and about 100 miles north of Scotland lie the Faroe islands, once possessed by Norway, but now owned by Denmark. They are 23 in number, 17 of which are inhabited. Covering a land area of about 540 square miles, they have a population of some 25,000. Principal island is Stromo. The group was discovered in the 8th century by Irish monks who built many hermitages on the rocky crags. Later, Norwegian raiders under Harold Schonhaar seized the islands and ruined the monasteries. In the 11th century, under the influence of King Olaf Trygvesen, Catholicism was re-established. First bishop came in 1076. On Stromo, at Thorshavn, there was an imposing church and the ancient capital Kirkebo had a beautiful gothic cathedral. Religion then flourished and every inhabited island had a monastery. But, towards the end of the 16th century, after Lutheranism had been imposed on Scandinavia and Amund Olafsen, last of a succession of 23 bishops, had been forced from his See, the Catholic religion gradually disappeared from the archipelago. All missionary attempts to revive it were in vain until recent times. In 1814, the Faroes passed under the dominion of Denmark. Ecclesiastically they are a part of the Danish Vicariate.

55. In 1857, the Jesuit missioner Bauer attempted the restoration. At Thorshavn he built a chapel. But after twelve years of labor, the mission only produced eight converts. Other Jesuits came. Their efforts were almost fruitless also. After their departure, the little church of Thorshavn was destroyed in 1874. From then on a priest from Copenhagen came only once a year to minister to a handful of Catholics.

56. Just twenty years ago Cardinal Van Rossum, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, on his way to consecrate the first Vicar Apostolic of Iceland, stopped at Stromo. After a visit to the venerable ruins of the ancient cathedral of Kirkebo, he resolved to have missionary work resumed. In 1931, two missioners and 5 Sisters came again to the islands. On May 22, in Thorshavn, on a portable altar in a room of a modest wooden thatch-roofed house, the missioners, surrounded by five kneeling Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, exposed the Blessed Sacrament. After an absence of nearly six decades Christ had regained His throne.

57. A few months later the community of Sisters secured a more worthy residence in the centre of the town where they were able to have a suitable chapel. The island press heralded the news that "Three priests have celebrated Mass in the new sanctuary." Before long, a little congregation of some forty were coming regularly to partake in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. The missioners opened a school in their rectory with twenty pupils. The Sisters by teaching embroidery attracted many of the natives to their classes.

58. The people of this Scandinavian archipelago are peaceable and hospitable, living up to what seems to be their motto "Let us treat friendly the strangers who come to us as friends." It is remarkable how they have retained some Catholic customs, such as the Sign of the Cross and fasting before Communion. The bulk of the islands belong to the Folkerkirke, or the Danish Lutheran Church, but the Baptists, Adventists and other sects have numerous adherents. Converts to Catholicism have been few, but an interest in the Catholic Church has been awakened and prospects are encouraging.

("The Church in the Faroe Islands" has been added by Mr. Stephen W. Johnson, Assistant Editor of *Catholic Missions*.)

Study Outline

Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.

If by chance this Study is considered too long to be discussed at one meeting, it is suggested that a part of the Study be selected for study and discussion.

Part 1. Paragraphs 1-20

Denmark was the first Scandinavian country to accept Christianity. St. Ansgar (801-65) came there in the 820's. But Christianity did not grip Denmark until King Canute (1018-35) called English bishops and priests into his realm. Christianity came to Norway through King Olaf Trygvesen. Christianity was established in Sweden about 1100.

In the centuries before the Reformation, the Scandinavian countries formed an organic part of Christian Europe. Evidence of the connection between the Northern and Latin worlds may be had from the number of students who throughout the Middle Ages went for their university studies to Paris, Bologna and other European centers of learning.

Protestantism penetrated Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries gradually. In Denmark especially its introduction was motivated by economics and politics. Sweden was the first of the Northern countries to be Lutheranised. Today in all the Scandinavian countries we find the State Church. In these State churches there are various tendencies which differ from the official church teaching. Grundvigianism is a case in point.

Questions

What is meant by Scandinavia?

What Scandinavian country first accepted Christianity?

Describe the introduction of Christianity into the other countries.

Explain the connection between the Northern and Latin

worlds before the Reformation.

What motivated the introduction of Lutheranism into Denmark?

How did Lutheranism come to Norway?

What was the state of the Church in Finland on the eve of the Reformation?

What is meant by the tendencies in the Northern State churches?

Who is responsible for Grundtvigianism?

What are the three characteristics of the movement?

Part 2. Paragraphs 21-37

Another movement is called the Inner Mission which means the mission within the nation. It is of Danish origin, dating from 1853. It is typically revivalist. In its most fanatical form it is anti-cultural and tainted with phariseeism. On its credit side may be noted the sincerity of its followers and their high appreciation of the lay apostolate.

An important Swedish movement is called Svenska Missions Forbundet, with a special conception of *congregation*. Another movement to be mentioned is the Halgelsefarbundet that stresses child-like relationship to God and holy conduct. Haugianism, Finnish Pietism, and a number of lesser movements have their places in the Protestant religious scene.

Scandinavian Protestantism has gained a more important place in the Lutheran world since the fall of Germany. Yet the church has little influence on Scandinavian life. The greatest defect in the church is the absence of ecclesiastical authority. Protestant preachers may go far in attacking important parts of Christian beliefs with impunity. On divorce, female ministers, education the Protestant churches take no authoritative position.

Questions

What is meant by the Inner Mission?

What is the Svenska Missions Forbundet?

Explain the origin of Haugianism.

What are the features of Finnish Pietism?

Discuss some of the Protestant theological movements.

What is the great difficulty for the Protestant Scandinavian churches?

What about Protestant church attendance?

What is the greatest defect in Scandinavian religious life?

Explain the controversy about female ministers.

What is Scandinavian Protestantism's problem on the school question?

Part 3. Paragraphs 38-57

In all Scandinavian countries Catholicism was banished from the time of the Protestant Revolt to the 19th century. Progress in Catholic life has been made since then but the Church even at present faces many problems. Foremost among them is that of education. For the first time since the Reformation a native bishop resides in Copenhagen.

Notable converts have marked the progress of the Church in Denmark and in other Scandinavian countries. Johannes Jorgensen and Sigrid Undset are the most prominent. Sweden is a country of the North where legal discrimination against the Catholic Church is still in force. The poverty of the Church in Sweden is a serious problem.

Half way between Norway and Iceland and about 100 miles north of Scotland lie the Faroe Islands. The principal island is Stromo. The Catholic Church once flourished on these islands but after the 16th century it gradually disappeared. All missionary attempts to revive it were in vain until recent times. At present prospects are encouraging.

Questions

What has been the position of Catholicism in the Scandinavian countries since the Reformation?

What is the status of Catholic education in Scandinavia?

Name two notable Scandinavian converts.

From a mission point of view Denmark differs from other Scandinavian countries. Explain.

Is the position of the Church in Denmark favorable?

Who is Dom Theodor Suhr?

State the outstanding characteristic of Danish Catholicism.

What is the situation of the Church in Sweden?

What is the mission story of the Faroe Islands?

What Catholic customs have been retained by the Faroe Islanders?

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The Church Amidst the Vikings

A Note on the Author

Hans Bang was born on the 24th of May, 1918. After his graduation from the University, he studied literature—with special emphasis on the French work. His studies ended when he received a Master of Arts degree. He is a born Catholic. He has been closely identified with the work which the Jesuits are doing in Copenhagen and has been an instructor in some of the higher grades. He has published a book having to do with the adaptations of Jacques Maritain's *The Elements of Philosophy*. He has also written articles for various Scandinavian publications, for example—one on Rousseau. Since 1947 he has been Assistant Director of the Danish Catholic publication *Catholica*.

The study outline and questions for "The Church in the Northern Countries," were formulated by Gerald C. Treacy, S.J., who has prepared study club editions of various encyclicals.

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